Film festivals offer rich tributaries from mainstream

On screen
by Warren Epstein

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If you're getting bored with the movies at the local multiplexes, you'll have plenty of opportunities in the coming weeks to expand your cinematic horizons.

On Friday and Saturday, the Lavender Film Festival — the first local festival devoted to gay and lesbian movies — will be at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. Call **635-7142** or log onto **www.lavenderfilms.org** (see reviews, page **LIFE 2**).

The second Cripple Creek Film Festival (it was called the Gold Camp Film Festival last year), rides back to the gambling town Sept. 29-Oct. 1 with a new slate of indies, classic Westerns, family fare and celebs. Katharine Ross ("Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid") and Barry Corbin ("Northern Exposure") are planning to return, and they'll be joined by Charlene Tilton ("Dallas"). Call **686-9249** or log onto **www.cripplecreekfilmfest.com.**

Other coming attractions include: the Aspen Filmfest, featuring a tribute to Anjelica Huston, Sept. 27-Oct. 1 at the Wheeler Opera House and the Isis Theater (call **970-920-5770**); the Denver International Film Festival, Oct. 12-22 at the Tivoli (**303-595-3456**); and the Rocky Mountain Women's Film Festival, Nov. 3-5 at the Fine Arts Center and Colorado College (I'll let you know when those tickets go on sale).

What an embarrassment of riches. I'm especially proud of the newest of the newcomers, the Lavender Film Festival. The folks behind this festival tried to get a festival going last year, but they started too late and couldn't get a venue.

This year, they've landed at the Fine Arts Center with the strongest gay-and-lesbian film lineup our state has to offer.

A lot of the credit for the quality of the films must go to Alma Cremonesi, one of the organizers, who has developed amazing contacts, having worked for the San Francisco International Film Festival and the former U.S. Environmental Film Festival in Colorado Springs.

The film lover scouted for films the past two years at the San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Festival, and it's there she met Patrik-Ian Polk, the director of the popular gay film "Punks."

The distributor had told Cremonesi that the movie wasn't available for small festivals like hers, but an appeal directly to the director snagged the film.

She begged, pleaded and cajoled her way to get the Colorado premiere of the German film "Aimee and Jaguar" and other important and engaging international films.

Organizers of the festival recognize that some people in the community won't be keen on a gay film festival, and I think they were smart not to feed possible protesters with overly explicit films.

"There was an awareness that we didn't want anything that would shock the community in any way. Some films I saw in San Francisco had lots of . . . prostitution and drugs. . . . We thought we could communicate the complexity of gay people without having a lot of drugs and sex without love," Cremonesi said.